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080924Z Mar 06

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PI, NEA/RA, EB  
COMMERCE FOR BIS - W WYSONG AND N WEANT  
ALSO FOR ITA/MAC/AMESA - T HOFFMAN  
ALSO FOR OGC/CLDP - J FILPI  
USTR FOR J BUNTIN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: VISIT OF COMMERCE ANTI-BOYCOTT COMPLIANCE STAFF

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1. (SBU) Commerce anti-boycott compliance senior policy analyst Frederick Davidson, Commerce senior compliance officer Cathleen Ryan, and State regional affairs officer Danielle Monosson visited Bahrain February 14-15 and met with government officials and business people concerning the boycott of Israel. In their meeting with Dr. Jameel Al Alawi, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs Director of Agreements and Treaties, the team explained that there had been a tremendous reduction in the number of Bahraini requests for boycott language in business documents over the past decade. In 2005 there were nine prohibited requests, and the goal was to bring that number to zero. Al Alawi said that the tender board prepares all government contracts and some employees at the board may occasionally use forms that contain old language. He noted that Finance Minister Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa had issued a circular to all ministries and government agencies in 2005 instructing them to remove all language about the boycott from contracts.

2. (SBU) Ryan stated that boycott language also appears occasionally in banks' letters of credit. Al Alawi said the government cannot force private businesses to change language in their business correspondence but agreed that the Bahrain Monetary Agency could inform the banks that boycott language is not necessary under Bahraini law.

3. (SBU) The anti-boycott team also met with Finance Ministry Director of Economic Planning Yusuf Humood and Ministry of Commerce trade official Eman Al Dossary. Humood said that the GOB had closed the Israel boycott office in 2005, meaning that enforcement of the primary boycott in Bahrain was not possible. This move was in keeping with the long term policy of removing the direct presence of the government from the economy. Al Dossary said that Bahrain was fully committed to its WTO obligations, including permitting trade with all other WTO members (read Israel).

4. (SBU) The team also spoke with representatives of Parsons and Black and Veatch, two American companies with a presence in Bahrain. The Parsons executive said that his insistence a few years ago on removing any boycott language from government contracts may have contributed to his lack of winning new business for a period. For the past 18 months, however, he had won several contracts and government officials had responded favorably to any requests to alter language in contracts.

MONROE